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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (7/02): THE GAZA STRIP TRUCE _
"NOT ABOUT MILITARY OBJECTIVES"

Main Stories:

The speech by Palestinian Authority President Mahmud Abbas at the Socialist International Conference in Athens on June 1 is front page news in all dailies. The dailies reprint the full text in which Abbas emphasizes that peace negotiations with Israel, "continue to face huge obstacles. The gap between the two positions continues to be wide and cannot be overcome if the Israeli Government does not take firm action and implement measures that confirm its serious desire to protect this opportunity." Abbas adds, "despite the tragic situation that we are living in, we have decided to give peace talks a chance to continue," the papers report.

News about Gaza crossing points continues to attract headlines. Al-Quds leads with a photo of exhausted Palestinian children waiting on the Egyptian side of the Rafah crossing. The front page report notes that Egypt opened the southern Rafah crossing point on July 1 to allow the passage of individuals stranded in Egypt into Gaza; and for the passage of Palestinians needing medical treatment into Egypt. Al-Hayat Al-Jadida highlights a photo of ambulances waiting in a crowd of people to exit Gaza into Egypt. Related coverage in Al-Quds highlights the July 1 assessment made by European Commission head General Pietro Pistolese in Rafah that he does not expect the Gaza crossings to remain permanently open.

Al-Quds' front page reports that Hamas denies deploying its forces along the northern borders of the Gaza Strip. Former Hamas Prime Minister Haniyyah criticized the Israeli position towards the truce [closing of crossing points] and considered it, "a discouraging start to the agreement" in a speech on July 1. For his part, Israeli Premier Olmert "threatened" on July 1, that his country will, "fight with all of Israel's power," if Palestinians do not honor the truce agreement. The paper rounds out reporting with a

note that Palestinian factions are considering the adoption of a united position towards Israel if Israel, "continues its truce violations" in Gaza.

The three dailies highlight a rocket attack by Israeli settlers on the Palestinian village of Burin near the West Bank city of Nablus on their front pages. The attack, which did not cause any injuries or material damage, was characterized by Palestinian presidency spokesperson Nabil Abu Rudaynah as, "Israeli escalation [of violence] by the settlers." PLO negotiator Sa'eb Erekat described the incident as, "a terrorist act by the settlers against our unarmed people and dangerous development," according to all papers. Al-Ayyam covers the July 1 meeting of Palestinian Authority President Abbas with Israeli Minister of Defense Barak held on the margins of the Socialist International Conference in Athens. Official Palestinian presidency spokesperson Nabil Abu Rudaynah told Al-Ayyam that Abbas reiterated to Barak the need to remove [West Bank] checkpoints to enable the free movement of the Palestinian people. The two officials also discussed the issue of halting Israeli settlement activities, the paper notes. In a brief report on Al-Ayyam's front page, Hamas denies handing Israel a new list of prisoners to be released in a possible exchange deal. Al-Ayyam also briefly reports that Hamas denied on July 1 that Palestinian Authority President Mahmud Abbas will meet with head of the Hamas Politburo Khaled Mish'al in Damascus next month.

Al-Quds reports on a USAID event in Yatta city in the West Bank Hebron Governorate. On July 1, the residents of Yatta city celebrated infrastructure improvements funded by USAID.

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BLOCK QUOTES:

1. In one of its main editorials, under the headline, "Will the Truce Last Long?" independent Al-Quds opines, (07/02) "...In evaluating the truce, one can conclude that it will not last long for several reasons. Mainly, because the basis of Israeli policy is not to implement a true peace with the Palestinians by respecting their demands, but rather to impose a peace by force that is in accordance with Israel's wishes ...Israel knows that the Palestinian people will not accept such an Israeli peace since it would mean surrender ..."

2. Independent Al-Ayyam runs an editorial by Dr. Ibrahim Ibrach entitled, "Why a Truce Now? Whose interest would an extension to the West Bank serve?" (07/02): "In order for us to understand the truce, we have to ask why there is a truce now?...For Israel, had the truce been successful in the past, Israel would have been forced to give up control of land in the West Bank. Today, however, the truce enables Israel to keep control of the West Bank at no cost except for allowing the entry of food and fuel, bought by Palestinians themselves, into the Gaza Strip... The truce and its success are not related to military objectives but to a political and strategic horizon... Israel will give the Palestinians, especially Hamas, one of two choices: Either maintain the truce in the Gaza Strip or embark on national reconciliation and the uniting of the two parts of the homeland..."

Walles